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## **Since 2008**

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# OSHA Fact Sheet

## Protect Yourself! Workers may be exposed to Fire Ants

Fire ants resemble ordinary ants. They average 1/8 to 1/4 inch in length and are reddish brown to black in color. Fire ants display aggressive behavior and they build mound-shaped nests.

### Interaction

Fire ants attack anything that disturbs their mound (nest). They firmly grasp skin with their jaws, and then sting and inject venom. Fire ants pivot at the head and inflict more stings in a circular pattern.



Photo: Texas A&M University

### Symptoms

The sting of a fire ant develops into a pustule (small, firm blister-like sore) in 24-48 hours. These pustules can become sites of secondary infection. Fire ant venom may cause a severe reaction in hypersensitive individuals, including nausea, shock, chest pains, and in rare cases, coma.



Photo: Bart Drees, Texas A&M University

### Prevention/Treatment

- Be aware – don't stand on ant nests or areas where they are foraging.
- Wear boots and/or tuck pant legs into your socks to reduce the risk of bite/sting.
- Use insect repellants, such as DEET or Picaridin, on clothing and footwear.
- If attacked, leave area immediately while brushing off ants with the use of a gloved hand or by using a cloth.
- Consult your pharmacist for treatment of minor bites and irritation.
- Seek immediate medical attention, particularly if you feel short of breath or have swelling.

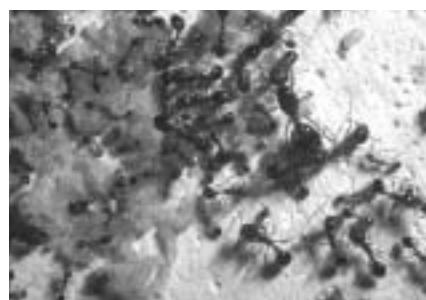


Photo: Bart Drees, Texas A&M University

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For more complete information:



U.S. Department of Labor  
[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)  
(800) 321-OSHA

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